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The Open Door Community – Hospitality & Resistance in the Catholic Worker Movement

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May 2008

Leaking Light

By Stacy Rector

Editor's note: This sermon, based on Matthew 16:21-17:9, was preached February 3, 2008, at the Open Door Community. Stacy is a Presbyterian minister and director of the Tennessee Coalition Against State Killing [TCASK].

As I prepared to write this sermon, I was sitting in my office in Nashville as cold raindrops pelted the window. The sky was gray and the wind was howling. So, rather than buckle down and focus on the task before me, I began to fantasize about summer — the warm, long days, the bright sunshine, and one of my favorite parts of summer, the evening dance of the lightning bugs. As a child I always knew that with the dusk debut of the lightning bugs, summer was just around the corner. I still get a surge of excitement when I see the first glows of their blinking bulbs in the late afternoon.

To let fear control us
and dictate who we are
and how we live
is a very real temptation,
and always has been.

And, as a child, I loved to catch them. I would find an old Mason jar, poke holes in the lid, and head outside for the chase. These sparkling wonder-bugs were just too good to leave alone. I wanted them to last forever and somehow thought that imprisoning them in a little glass jar would do the trick. I guess I figured that in the jar they would be safe from other bugs or birds or whatever preys upon lightning bugs, and I could make sure that no harm would befall them. I could keep them in my room with me and enjoy their dance forever.

Of course, we all know how this story ends: I would enjoy the little light show in the darkness of my bedroom for only one short evening, because my prisoners were almost always dead by morning. And yet I would often try again on following evenings, as if the results would be different the next time around.

In my attempts to keep the little bugs safe and contained in my glass jar, I sapped the life right out of them. Instead of appreciating their dance and letting them go, I tried to hold on too tightly, and their lights simply went out.

I am not sure if they have lightning bugs in Galilee, but if they do, I would bet that the disciples caught a few in their childhoods. Maybe even the boy Jesus once hoped to hold onto a lightning bug, but learned, as we all do, that the mysterious light cannot be contained for long. Perhaps that discovery was the lightning bug's gift to the young Messiah whom we meet in our text today along with his disciples, all grown up and beginning the most difficult journey of his life.

Jesus is instructing his disciples on what is to come for him in Jerusalem. But, like us, they don't want to hear it. They

don't want to hear his tales of suffering and death.

Up to this point, they have gotten a taste of the good life with Jesus: a feast for thousands of folks from just a few loaves and fish, miraculous healings of regular people, like Peter's mama and a paralyzed man dropped through a roof, and, of course, who can forget their exciting evening of surfing without the board as Jesus and Peter walked on the water. But suffering and death have not been part of the program thus far, and certainly not what the disciples signed up for. And so, at the first signs of trouble, our petulant friend Peter starts poking holes in the lid of a jar in order to put Jesus safely inside.

"God forbid it, Lord!" proclaims Peter. "This must never happen to you."

Peter's voice is not only demanding in this text, but it is downright afraid. Peter is afraid, afraid of Jesus' difficult words of impending suffering and death, afraid of what those words mean for Jesus, afraid of what they mean for himself, and his fear gets the better of him, as it so often gets the better of us.

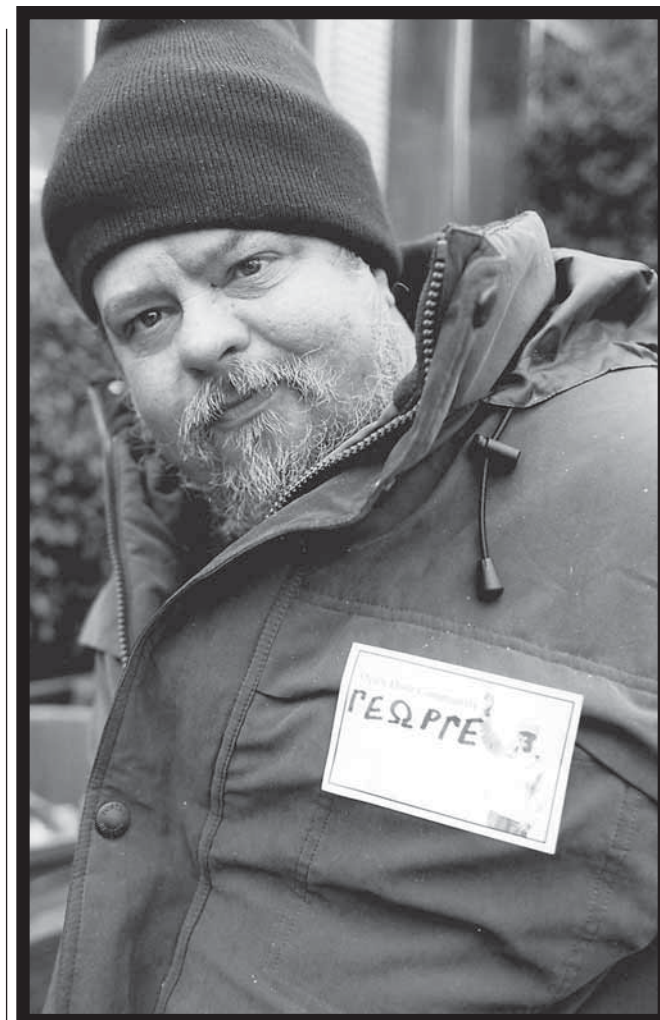
Fear is like that, isn't it? Either with a slow creep from somewhere in our guts or with the suddenness of a choke hold, fear can tie us up in knots, leave us gasping for breath and running for cover. We don't have to look very far to see the results of our fearful living.

Just look at our jails and prisons, full to overflowing with mostly poor people, many struggling with mental illness or trapped by addiction. We don't know what to do with such folks, and rather than face the painful work of looking at ourselves, our systems and our values to understand why so many people are living such difficult realities, we lock them away — out of sight and out of mind.

We are afraid. We are afraid of our sisters and brothers who live on the streets, so much so that we criminalize them too. In fact, the city of Nashville recently passed an anti-panhandling ordinance for the downtown area. We don't want homeless folks to bother all those country music fans, do we? We don't even want to look at them. If we make eye contact, we are afraid of what they might ask of us, afraid of what seeing them might require, afraid of how they make us feel or what we might be called to do.

We are afraid. So we build walls to keep others out, whether they are iron gates around our McMansions or miles of fence, laced with barbed wire and spotlights, on our nation's southern border.

And our fear tells us lies ... like the lie that if we are only violent enough, we can stop the violence of others. We've just got to be meaner than they are, right? So we drop bombs and buy guns and send people to death row. On the news a few days ago, I even heard that there are women who are holding Taser parties. Tasers are being marketed like Tupperware, demonstrating that fear can not only get the best of you, but it can make you a profit.



George 12/05

Calvin Kimbrough

Good Bye Dear George

By Murphy Davis

George Britt came into our lives sometime in the mid-1980s. He spent a number of years as a patient at Central State Hospital near Milledgeville, where he lived in three different buildings on the hospital campus. When he was released, he came to Atlanta.

A family member found him a place to live, but it was not to George's liking. He showed up on Ponce de Leon. I think he was placed in another personal care home or two, but it never worked. George kept reappearing on Ponce de Leon, and eventually the street became his home. More specifically, the front yard of the Open Door Community became his home. And we became his family.

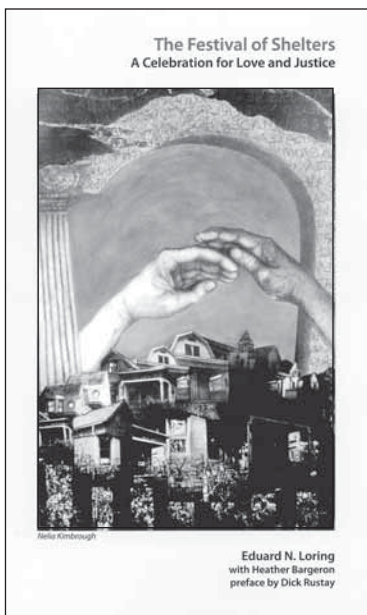
George suffered from schizophrenia. And George was brilliant. He was probably one of the best-known personalities on the avenue in the past 20 years, and there is no doubt in my mind that he knew more people's names than anybody else — even more than Eduard Loring.

When George met you, he heard your name and then

Leaking Light, continued on page 8

Good Bye George, continued on page 8

available now!



The Festival of Shelters A Celebration for Love and Justice

By **Eduard Loring**
with Heather Bargeron
preface by Dick Rustay

I read "The Festival of Shelters," Ed ... and I am chastened. When I got to the last page it said, "This book is not for sale." I was barking up the wrong tree to suggest it sell for 25 cents. I repent, and will accept your grace and mercy as well as that of God, the great love and forgiver.

I like the focus on living and acting in a way that interrupts our normal pattern as a gift to celebrate. The theme of interruption of our patterns is a key theme throughout, a theme I find challenging and helpful.

Your focus on interrupting the normal patterns becomes possible, as you suggest, because of the call of God to follow Jesus the interrupter and the interrupted.

Your focus on showing that Christ saves because of the way one behaves is also a challenge. And I have found this to be true for me as a mode of resistance to being domesticated. This gives the cost of discipleship the content of bearing the cross....

Don Beisswenger
activist, author, pastor, retired professor, teacher

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www.opendoorcommunity.org

The Suffering God

By **Bruce Bishop**

Editor's note: Bruce Bishop is a member of the Open Door extended community and lived at 910 for more than two years. He would welcome letters or cards during his illness. You can write to him at 404 East Howell Street, Apt. 306, Seattle, WA 98122.

After four unsuccessful emergency room visits, the pain in my left testicle became so great that I took all the sharp knives out of my apartment kitchen drawer downstairs to the dumpster and threw them in. I was scared I might kill myself. The pain was so bad that it squeezed out of my lips "My God, why have you forsaken me?" as I lay on a love seat at Virginia Mason Hospital in Seattle. I was waiting for the pharmacy to open to get a painkiller that didn't work.

This suffering, though not as intense, but undiagnosed, is continuing.

Suffering is a strange thing. It can embitter or enlighten, depending on whether it is offered up to God. Suffering can slow one down and be the opportunity of living one day at a time and resting in the arms of our God through the pain.

Paradoxically, it seems as if God has forsaken at least Christ, and at times I have felt forsaken in an ocean of either emotional or now physical pain. How can this be? With a loving God, are we not supposed to be given no more than we can bear?

Here are some of my thoughts on this matter.

A possible answer to this cry of the unbearable is that God broke down the boundaries of what is bearable, to the suffering of the unbearable. To share in the image of God's suffering for others, Christ was anointed, and sometimes we are too, with the unbearable, to the focused center of new compassion.



Bruce Bishop

Contrary to the image of an angry God looking to repay injustice, my image of God is one of great suffering through loving the enemy. The image of this God is displayed in the absorption of unlimited pain, by Christ on the cross. "When you see me, you see the Holy One."

God, I believe, suffers a loneliness of pain, starting with Lucifer, down the violent years to today. This lie of violence is a dart into the heart of God, yet God's love of the enemy stands, suffers and rejoices. I wonder if maybe the strength of evil is more than we reckon, and that love has a self-limiting "weakness," because of free will, which watched the plodding march to isolation and death. Oh God, so often you are the victim of bad press. Can the universe contain your pain? The stars cry and cannot express your sorrow and joy. Can I not help but love you? Paradox upon paradox, into Mystery. ✠

HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is published 11 times a year by the Open Door Community (PCUS), Inc., an Atlanta Protestant Catholic Worker community: Christians called to resist war and violence and nurture community in ministry with and advocacy for the homeless poor and prisoners, particularly those on death row. Subscriptions are free. A newspaper request form is included in each issue. Manuscripts and letters are welcomed. Inclusive language editing is standard.

A \$7 donation to the Open Door Community would help to cover the costs of printing and mailing **Hospitality** for one year. A \$30 donation covers overseas delivery for one year.

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Calvin Kimbrough
Morning coffee on the front steps at 910.

Newspaper

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Nelia and Calvin Kimbrough: Worship, Art, and Music Coordinators
Chuck Harris: Volunteer Coordinator
Murphy Davis: Southern Prison Ministry

Court Frees Australian Peacemakers

By Jim Consedine

Editor's note: Jim Consedine has been a member of the Catholic Worker in Christchurch, New Zealand, since the 1980s. He is a priest of the local diocese, a former prison chaplain and pastor, an author on issues of restorative justice and spirituality, and a prison abolitionist.

Shades of the classic Australian movie "The Castle" were played out recently in the Northern Territory Court of Criminal Appeal, where the full bench unanimously quashed the convictions of four Christian peace activists: Jim Dowling, 52; Adele Goldie, 31; Donna Mulhearn, 39; and Bryan Law, 52.

Dowling, a Catholic Worker veteran of 30 years' standing; Mulhearn, a former "human shield" in Iraq; Law, a taxi driver from Cairns; and Goldie all voluntarily returned to Darwin and had been imprisoned for up to two weeks before the appeal.

The four had been found guilty of using bolt cutters on a high-security fence and entering Pine Gap, the U.S.-Australian spy base near Alice Springs, in December 2005. The protesters were convicted last June and together were fined more than \$3,000.

It was the first time intruders had reached the technical support area at Pine Gap, and Philip Ruddock, then Australia's attorney general, approved charges against the protesters under the 1952 Defence (Special Undertakings) Act, which carried a maximum prison sentence of seven years.

The four, calling themselves "Christians Against All Terrorism," said they entered the facility because it played a role in the targeting of missiles in Iraq and was involved in "crimes against humanity." Mulhearn said the protesters sought to put Pine Gap on trial. They had sought to argue that it was an instrument of aggression and not a defense facility, but an Alice Springs judge ruled that they could not debate that point in court.

The Commonwealth appealed against what it said was the leniency of the sentence, while the defendants appealed against their convictions.

On February 22, in the Northern Territory Court of Criminal Appeal in Darwin, the full bench unanimously acquitted all four defendants of their convictions. The three appeal judges agreed that there was a miscarriage of justice at last year's trial, because the peace activists were not able to bring evidence before the jury about the function of Pine Gap.

"The defendants were deprived of a possible defence, mainly establishing that the facility was not necessary for defence purposes," said Chief Justice Brian Martin. There were also other, more technical grounds to the appeal.

The Commonwealth immediately sought a retrial, but was quickly refused.

"What would be achieved for these individuals or the community if there is a retrial?" asked Justice Riley, rather sternly. The judges unanimously ruled that there would be no retrial. The fact that the four had already served prison time for refusing to pay their fines, they said, was a significant factor in the decision against a retrial.

The "David vs. Goliath" outcome was the result of the excellent work of the activists' legal team. The reference to the movie "The Castle" comes from the fact that the four activists are all committed to social justice and enhancing the lives of the poor and have little economic clout, relying through their earlier trial on donations and their own verbal skills. They



Tom Lewis

Editor's note: Artist and activist Tom Lewis died on April 4, 2008. He was 68. This woodcut is from a series he created in 1971 at the Lewisburg Penitentiary in Pennsylvania, where he was serving time for his participation in the burning of draft records as a member of the Catonsville 9.

simply couldn't afford top lawyers to argue their case.

Enter Ron Merkel Q.C., a former Federal Court judge who offered to act *pro bono* for the group in their appeal. It doesn't happen just in movies! And what a performance he gave, along with two other lawyers, Rowena Orr and Russell Goldflam.

The four accused were unanimous in praise of their legal team, calling them "brilliant" and "stunning." "They were committed, focused, absolutely brilliant," Mulhearn said.

The result raises significant questions for the Australian government about the use of the Defence (Special Undertakings) Act of 1952, under which they had become the first Australians charged. It almost certainly will be the last time the act will be used in this context.

It is a victory for fairness and common sense, and a slap in the face for prosecutors who sought to use draconian legislation against pacifists partaking in nonviolent civil disobedience.

Outside the court, Law said that some of the protesters planned another incursion at Pine Gap on Anzac Day. "We are going to walk across the desert, into the Pine Gap base, into the technical area and challenge the government's right to maintain a terror base in our country," he declared. "Pine Gap is not a base for the defense of Australia. Pine Gap is an instrument of international aggression."

Mulhearn said the ruling raised questions about the legitimacy of an outdated law. "It's a draconian law and it was an extremist move that the act be used against us," she said. "It means the federal government will have to look at the Defence (Special Undertakings) Act and the application it has now for any other activists who want to participate in nonviolent civil disobedience at Pine Gap." ♣

THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS APPROVE BUSH'S WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

Lest I merge
with mountains that surely will fall,
their decrepitude my own –

Lest I walk shod
in blood of Abel, crying from the earth;
'My tantamount, my brother, my undoer' –

Lest eons I must carry
Rachel's sacrifice, her tears my albatross –

Lest I the Christ
disavow,
and Him who shackled there
I drag through sludge
of cowardice and dismay –

Lest weighed, I be found
wanting –
no guest of heaven,
a ghost, and no egress
from foolish trumpery of time –

Lest I disappear, down down
the 110th escalation
of pride,
and truncated, eyeless, soulless,
be found
unfit for armed might,
for rubble and America –

Lest I be sifted
like wheat or chaff,
and under a pall
(the appalling flag)

am borne away
piecemeal
to broken doorways
of Sheol or limbo,
(the divergencies
not large, nor mine to choose) –

Lest I

~ Daniel Berrigan, S.J.

*Delighted with good news from Open Door.
Be of good heart! Dan*

Editor's note: Daniel Berrigan is a Prophet, Poet, Resister, Priest and Peacemaker who lives in New York and celebrates his 87th birthday on May 9, 2008.

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People to accompany Community members to doctors' appointments.

Groups or individuals to make individually wrapped meat and cheese sandwiches (**no bologna or pb&j, please**) on whole wheat bread for our homeless and hungry friends.

People to cook or bring supper for the Community on certain Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday evenings.

Volunteers for Monday and Tuesday breakfasts (5:50-9:30 a.m.); Wednesday soup kitchen (9:50 a.m.-1:30 p.m.); Thursday showers (7:30-11:00 a.m.) and bag lunch (8:00 a.m.-12 noon).

Volunteers to help staff our foot clinic on Wednesday evenings (6:45-9:15 p.m.).

**For more information,
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June 19, 1968: Solidarity Day A Personal Memoir

By **Eduard-the-Agitator Loring**

In memory of Dr. Gordon Harland, who taught me the life and thought of Martin Luther King Jr. and the irony of Southern history.

How am I to live out the death of Martin Luther King Jr.? Jesus-the-Jew, Dietrich Bonhoeffer? Malcolm X? Mahatma Gandhi, Viola Liuzzo, Al Smith, street-named "Gypsy"? Murdered all for faith and agitation.

And how do I live the life of those who gave their lives away for me? Dorothy Day, Howard Thurman, Clarence Jordan, Phil Berrigan, Bill Stringfellow, Peter Waldo (and perhaps he was killed)?

And how do I follow my leaders today? Murphy Davis, Nelia Kimbrough, Calvin Kimbrough, Dick and Gladys Rustay, Rev. Timothy McDonald III, Jeff Dietrich and Catherine Morris, Ched Myers, Dan Berrigan, Don Beisswenger, Mary and Lewis Sinclair, Barack Obama and Howard Zinn?

Of course I am not certain. But I know where the answer lies. And I hope to meet each of you at the Howdy Do Crossroads.

On April 4, 1968, I was remade in the *imago dei*. Yahweh Elohim placed me in the blood-washed band that sings the lyrics from the hearts, minds and voices of the Hebrew prophets, the agitators. Sitting in my living room in Madison, New Jersey, late that night, and finally alone, in the dark, I promised Dr. King and Jesus, our Messiah, that I would ever after protest in the streets.

A promise is easier to make than fulfill. I was 28 years old, the age of our daughter, Hannah Loring-Davis, today.

On April 8, 1968, I made my first march, in Memphis, Tennessee. The judge had lifted the injunction on April 4 and the march would go on as planned on the 8th.

For me it is still going on. In fact I have marched that march twice, a second time in 1998. Every time I take out the garbage at the Open Door Community, I am making that march.

How did the Southern Christian Leadership Conference live out the death of Martin Luther King Jr.? Step One: a funeral for a King. Step Two: go ahead with the hastily planned, most radical "people's action" ever performed in American history, including Bacon's Rebellion, which used violence as a means.

White liberals and the white press did not support the agenda of the Poor People's Campaign, because of its "revolution of values," its call for an "Economic Bill of Rights," and the thrust to restructure the U.S. economic system from capitalism toward democratic socialism (e.g., the campaign was interpreted to be "un-American"). But onward marched the Southern Christian Leadership soldiers. They, with "grunts" from around this nation, all colors, almost all poor, went into the fray, onto the front line as the historical echoes of Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg shrieked across the blustery water-filled sky, which finally drowned the movement on June 24, 1968.

Overwhelmed is a watery word. Struggling, fighting, drowning. Robert F. Kennedy murdered now. Hope dashed. Strength waning as in the body of a 68-year-old. "Defeat" resided on the imaginary but racist Red Skins scoreboard. Nixon and Strom Thurmond smiling. Ho Chi Minh weeping like Ralph David Abernathy. End in sight. But what did they (we) see? What is an end? What is sight? What is The End? Why is there no room in the Inn? So what do you do when there is nothing else to do?

The planners called and we came. 50,000 of us came

to Resurrection City: June 19, 1968. Solidarity Day. With the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air over Vietnam, with hunger and famine stalking the land of plenty, with the Poor People's Campaign in mud and tottering on the brink of retreat, we came.

We came because we love. We came because we care. We came because we want to save the soul of America. We came to honor Martin Luther King Jr. We came because we were angry. We came because from the voices of the ancestors, the formation of our own hearts, the death of our leaders, we hungered and thirsted for righteousness. We still do today.

We came because from the voices of the ancestors, the formation of our own hearts, the death of our leaders, we hungered and thirsted for righteousness.

Before summer light glowed in the sky, but as the stars readied for daily death, I stood at the Erie Lackawanna Railroad Station in downtown Madison, New Jersey. Forty of us waited and stared. Not much talk. A few of us were African-Americans transplanted from Southern cotton fields to the North in hope of finding the light promised to Harriet Tubman so many generations ago.

At 5 a.m. the bus arrives. We climb on board. Soon we fall asleep as the driver takes us southward toward Resurrection City, where hope is being buried for the resurrection of Martin Luther King Jr., Jesus and poor people.

At midmorning we arrived in the capital of the most powerful nation on earth, but too poor in spirit to help the poor (dead Dr. King named us). We gathered at the starting point. I felt the April 4 assassination and the April 8 march all over again. Late, slow, muddy, muggy, felt like the D.C. about which Abraham Lincoln complained.

Finally we began to move, on Grady Hospital time, which renders an hour every 90 minutes. I was alone. Knew no one. Was there anyone else from Drew University in our group? I never sought nor found an answer.

Later, hours later, at the Lincoln Memorial, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Dr. King's stand-in, told the five times 10,000 of us:

"Whereas we stand in the shadow of Lincoln the Emancipator, who freed us into capitalism without capital; whereas we stand in a land of surplus food with 10 million starving citizens, and whereas the soil bank has become Holy Land . . . the land on which some men [women, girls and boys] swim in wealth while others drown in tears from broken promises, destroyed dreams and blasted hopes . . . For the life we live and the life we love we vow to fight for a new sensitive and sensible economic order, in that all men [and women] deserve a job or an income if they are to have human dignity; all men [and women] deserve a job or an income, for it is not alone by men's [and women's] work but by God's grace that America is so fertile and rich; and America can afford a job or income for all men [and women] if she has the

June 19, 1968, continued on page 10

Keeping the Dream Alive: Lessons From MLK Jr. for Today (Part 2)

By Dwight N. Hopkins

Editor's note: Dwight N. Hopkins is a professor of theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School and an ordained Baptist minister. His books include "Being Human: Race, Culture, and Religion." His Web site is <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/faculty/hopkins.shtml>. This article was delivered as a lecture at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta in 2003 as part of a lecture series for the Evangelical Lutheran Church celebrating 40 years since the 1963 March on Washington and Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. Part 1 of this article appeared in the April 2008 issue of Hospitality.

Besides his fourfold vision of the role of the Christian church — as beacon for justice, servant, organizer for the poor and healer of the broken — Martin Luther King Jr. offers us some insight about what spirituality is. He does this by standing in a specific spiritual tradition when, on another occasion, he again paraphrases Luke 4:18 and proclaims:

"Jesus said the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he's anointed me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach the gospel to the poor, to bring deliverance to those who are in captivity and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. And I must confess that the spirit of the Lord is upon me."

Here in his biblical interpretation, King stresses two aspects of a theological spirituality.

The first act of Christian spirituality is not correct doctrine but a freeing service to the poor, the homeless, the unemployed, the victims of AIDS and rape, the immigrant stranger, the hungry and those without proper clothing. Christian spirituality means confronting the everyday pain and humiliation that face the faceless in society. It means commitment to and standing with those who suffer. To be compelled by the spirit, then, the church has to root itself primarily in the communities and neighborhoods of poor whites and people of color where, from King's perspective, the Lord's spirit was born and still resides.

Christian spirituality greets the church in the struggle for freedom of the least of these in society ("The truth will set you free," John 8:32). Indeed, for the spirituality of the 11 o'clock church service on Sunday to be authenticated, this Sunday spirituality has to receive God's presence in suffering and struggle in the Monday-through-Saturday lower-income communities of North America. It is this latter spirit that "will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13).

The practice of a theological spirituality fundamentally means social transformation of harmful structures and systems that push

down the most vulnerable people. Any talk about the spirit in the church that leaves a satanic systemic spirit in place serves the injustice that breeds a harmful form of capitalism, the second-class status of women, U.S. military presence abroad, oppression of those with same-gender attractions and, of course, white supremacy over African-Americans and others of color.

Moreover, the anointing of "the spirit of the Lord" commissions us to proclaim the good news of freedom. God's loving freedom has become our freedom, because Jesus' victory over oppression has opened up a new world where everlasting life begins now (John 3:16). This spirit calls on theology to speak with, for and to those who have no voices. It calls on theology to say that the gospel of freedom for a full individual and collective life reigns now for our fellow citizens who need our help and, in fact, for our fellow citizens around the entire globe. Martin Luther King Jr. recognized the prophetic nature of speaking the truth about Christian spiritual anointing: "We are called," he proclaimed, "to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for the victims of our nation. ..."

For King, the imperial war conducted by a superpower against poor nations of color mirrored the domestic capitalist war against poor white people and people of color.

The poor have to hear that Jesus' goals have won and, therefore, have made them somebody. The somebodyness of the proclaimed gospel is not a mushy, feel-good, heathenistic self-indulgence. On the contrary, it empowers the poor to realize their true spiritual identity. For the African-American poor in particular, it affirms their African self-identity.

Part of announcing a liberating spirituality to the black victims of society, then, is to tell them that their African self or their black self comes from the grace of God. This is why Rev. King at one point shouted out loud, "Yes, we must stand up and say, 'I'm black and I'm beautiful,' and this self-affirmation is the black man's need, made compelling by the white man's crimes against him."

Self-identity language of blackness and Africanness has the potential to grip the

poor and help them to see, with new eyes, the reality and future possibilities of a new heaven on earth. If the social and language structure of the dominating white society has been subverted by the good news of the vision and goals of Jesus, then poor black people no longer feel defined by a white ruling culture. They claim and name themselves in the liberated space created by Jesus' liberating spirit. To say who you are is part of waging war against egregious labels that deny your humanity. Culture — that is, the act of identifying oneself in accordance with freedom — is, then, an important aspect of black theology's transformative spirituality.

Coupled with suggesting the need to revisit and broaden our vision of healthy spirituality, King's life and theology urge us to consider seriously the Christian necessity and the risks of faith when we oppose the U.S. government and its thirst for oil in foreign lands.

On April 4, 1967 at Riverside Church in New York City, exactly one year before his martyrdom, King gave his classic "Beyond Vietnam" speech. Immediately after this historic Christian witness, he was opposed by the president of the United States, the FBI, many other national civil rights leaders, foundational funding sources, the white-controlled mainstream press, several board members of his own organization (the Southern Christian Leadership Conference) and millions of Americans across the land. He was instructed that the black church should stick to domestic issues such as race, or winning souls to Christ, and hooping and tuning. He was told that the black church should not mix international issues with domestic ones.

Despite these condescending instructions and threats, King believed that failure to speak out when the United States goes to war against a smaller nation would be a prime instance when silence meant betrayal — not betrayal of the United States, but betrayal of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a situation of superpower aggression, opposition to the thirst for oil through war is the best example of black homiletical hooping and tuning.

As an ordained Christian pastor, King could not separate the Lordship of Christ. All of reality was interconnected. That is why he wrote:

"Now when I say question the whole of society, it means ultimately coming to see that the problem of racism, the problem of economic exploitation, and the problem of war are all tied together. ...

"A nation that will keep people in slavery for 244 years will 'thingify' them, make them things. Therefore they will exploit them, and poor people generally, economically. And a nation that will exploit



Brian Kavanagh

economically will have to have foreign investments and everything else, and will have to use its military might to protect them. All of these problems are tied together."

What King teaches us is that there is a direct connection between the U.S. government's acting as a superpower globally and its negative policies domestically. The forces that benefited from a structure of white power and redistribution of wealth upward in the United States were the same forces that demonized people of color in the Third World and made plans to steal their oil. In a similar way, money set aside for poor folk and working-class families domestically will now be used to pay monopoly capitalist corporations that make products for war internationally.

All one has to do is ask a series of questions. How much does one bomb cost? How much do aircraft cost? How much does a naval carrier cost? Who makes these machines for killing people in other lands? Are they owned by the collective American people or by a small handful of families? After the United States invades Third World countries and takes their oil, does the ownership of that oil go into the collective hands of the American people or those of a small group of families?

These are the types of questions that King was posing when he spoke out against the Vietnam War. In response, he was labeled unpatriotic, a Communist sympathizer and a supporter of terrorism. But King would not compromise the gospel of Christ; that is why he called the U.S. government "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today."

In King's eyes, war abroad meant economic and spiritual death for the

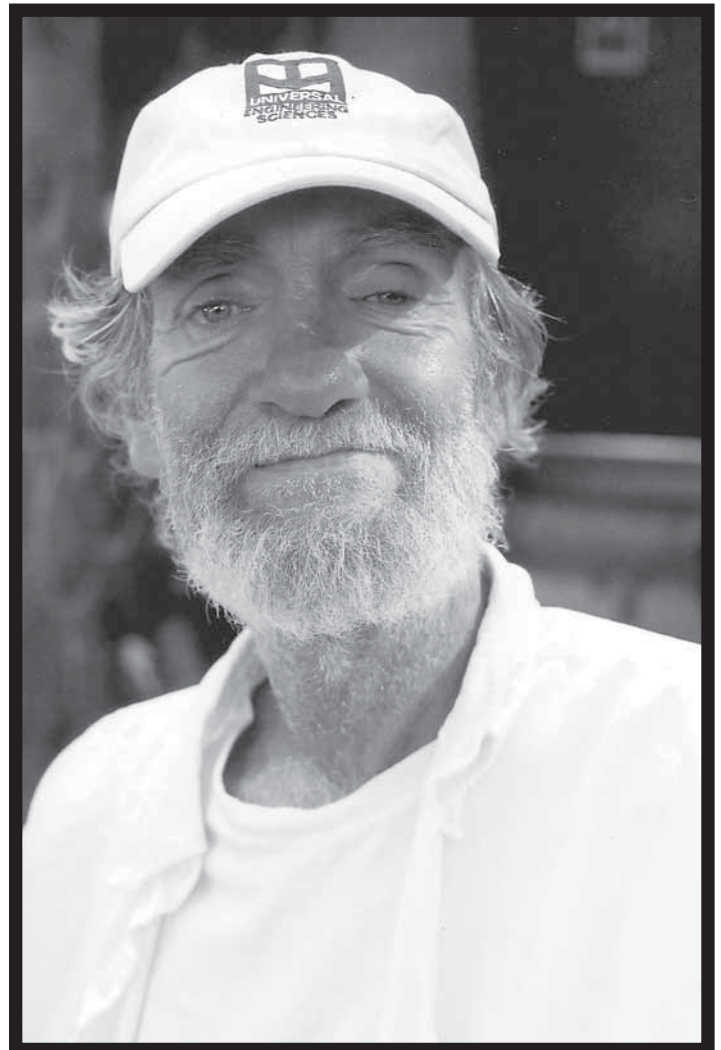
Keeping the Dream, continued on page 9



At Our Home

photographs by **Calvin Kimbrough**

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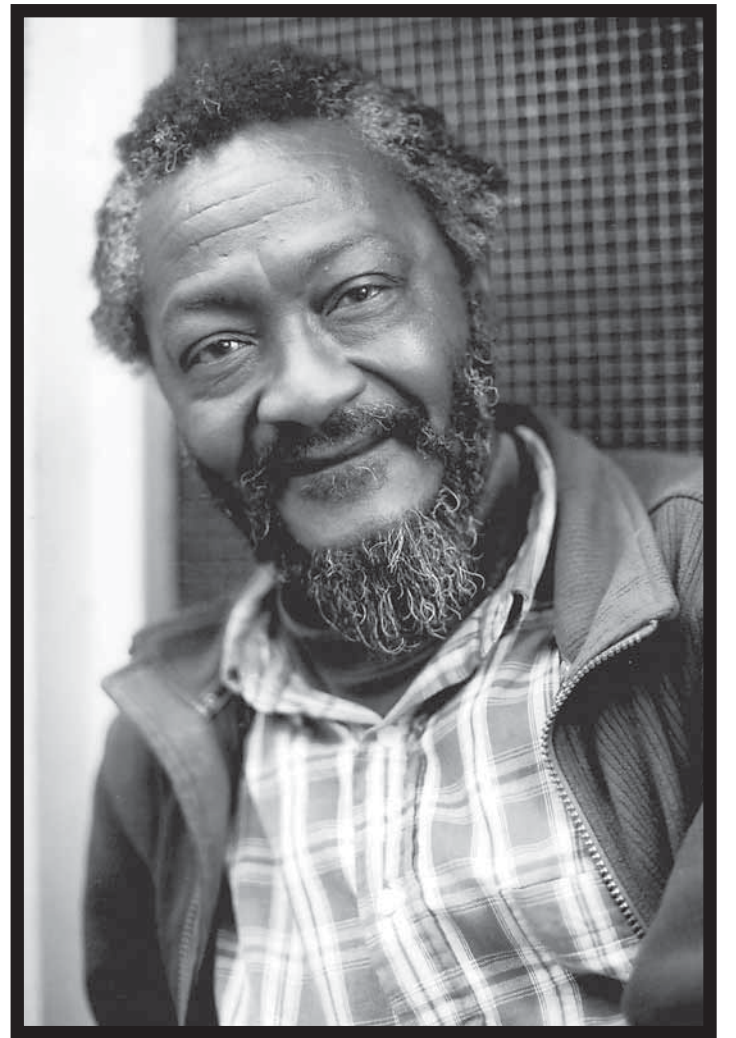


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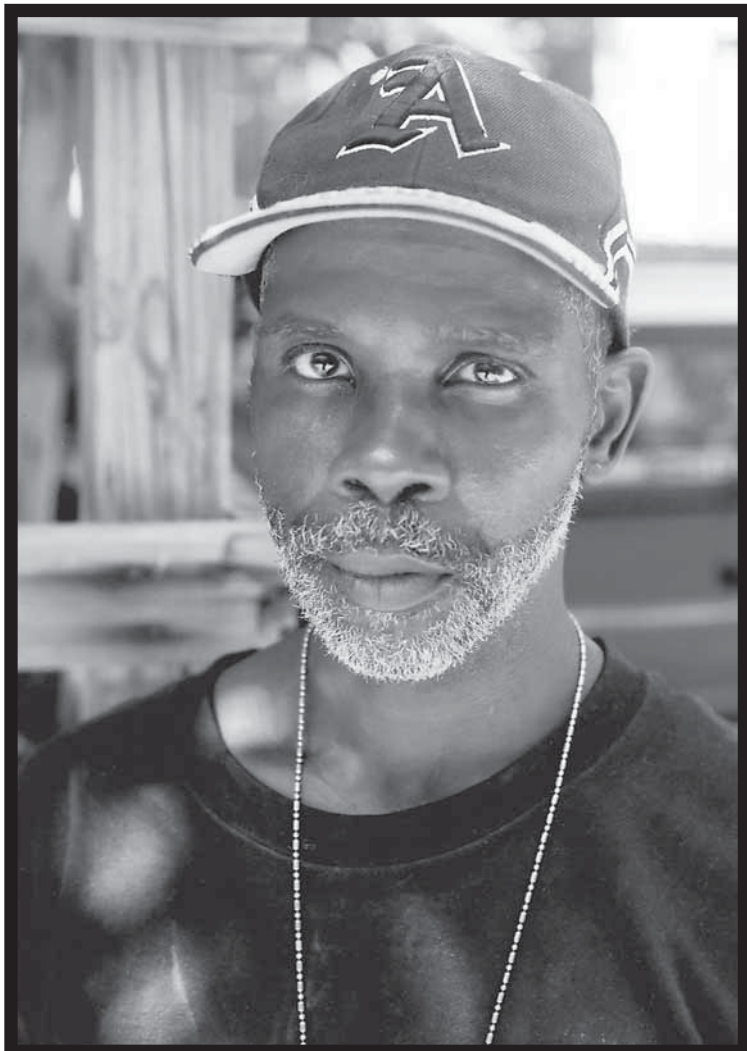
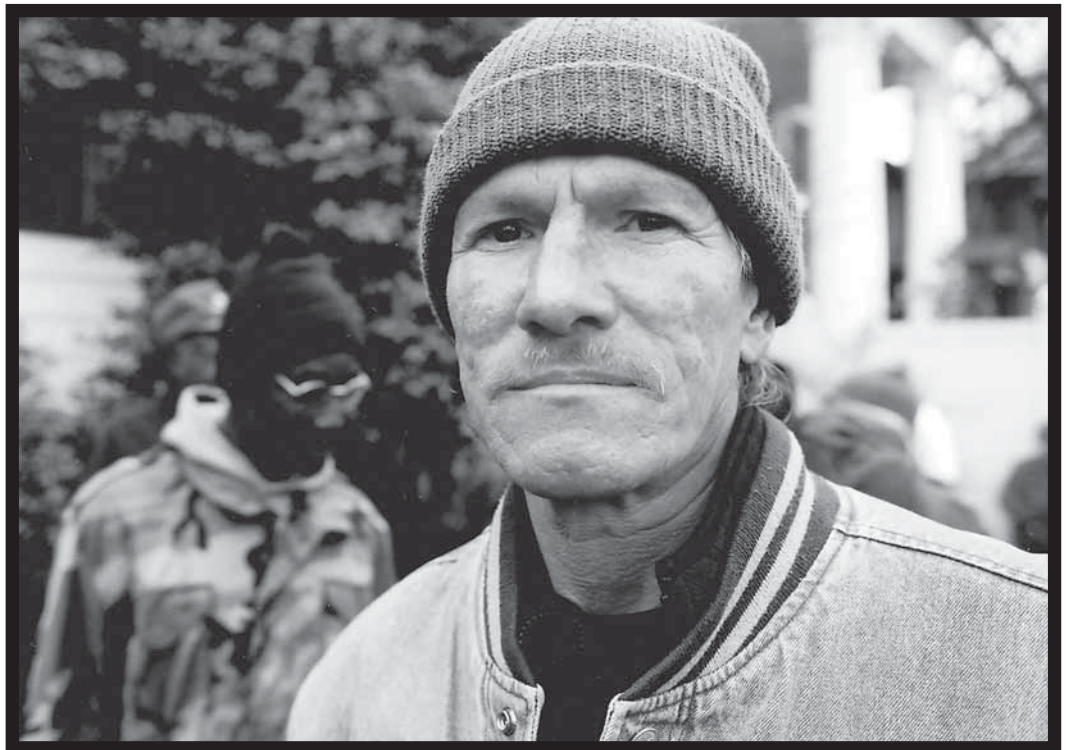
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Leaking Light, continued from page 1

To let fear control us and dictate who we are and how we live is a very real temptation, and always has been. And it is a real temptation for Jesus too, as a part of him would surely prefer to walk away, to avoid the suffering, to find a nice warm place to curl up and hide. Perhaps Peter hits a nerve here by naming Jesus' own struggle, eliciting such a strong reaction: "Get behind me, Satan, Tempter." We are so tempted to look for an easier way, a way without sacrifice, a way that won't inconvenience us or keep us up at night. Yes, indeed, there is such a way, but it is not God's way.

You here at the Open Door know that already. You know it each day as you open your doors to the suffering, as you feed hungry bellies and rub aching feet. You know it as you stand up in the halls of power and privilege to demand justice even when no one wants to listen. You know it as you walk with those who are hated and despised by the world and stand with them and for them as they face the needle or the chair. You know the temptation to find another way, but you resist, witnessing through your life together that there is no other way than Jesus' way. For to take up our cross and follow Jesus, even in the pain and mess, is the only way to truly discover the giftedness of our lives, even if it someday means losing them.

About two years ago, a tornado hit my hometown of Dyersburg, Tennessee, and killed 16 people in the area, including a dear friend of my family. The priest who spoke at her funeral service, a wonderful man and a co-worker in the struggle against the death penalty, the Rev. Joe Porter, had served the little Episcopal parish in Dyersburg for a few years before this storm, and he was deeply pained by all the loss.

At the funeral, Joe tried to offer some word of comfort in the midst of the tragedy. He told a story about a man whose car skidded off of a country back road and into a ditch during a rainstorm. It was dark, wet and cold outside. The man's cell phone wasn't working. He was banged up, and he knew he couldn't walk far. He didn't know when or if someone would ever show up.

After he had waited for what seemed like hours, a beat-up truck pulled up and an old farmer got out. The old farmer opened up an umbrella and said, "I don't know how much help I will be to you. I am just about out of gas myself and don't have a phone. I don't have nothing to pull your car out with, and walking wouldn't get us very far. But I'll do what I can."

"What is it exactly that you can do?" asked the rattled man in the ditch.

"Well," said the farmer, "I reckon I can come down there and get in that ditch with you."

Here at the Open Door, you all get down in the ditches with folks every day. And you have taught me over the years that if I want to follow Jesus, if I want to find my life, I have to get down in those ditches too. After all, getting in the ditch with folks — taking up the cross — that is what the Lenten season is all about as we prepare to

walk with Jesus to Jerusalem for the last time.

This weekend, Murphy and Eduard helped me to face my own fear as I travel on a journey with a man on Tennessee's death row. Steve and I have been friends now for 10 years, and we see each other every other week and talk on the phone often. For so long, I have been able to deny the reality of his situation, to fool myself into believing that we will never actually have to face the finality of execution. But I can't continue to avoid the reality, because time is running out, he now waits as the U.S. Supreme Court decides if it will hear his last appeal.

And I am afraid — afraid of all the pain deep inside of him that he tries to hide but that lately is bubbling to the surface. I am afraid of all the pain inside of me, upon which I often try to put a brave face. I am afraid of this pain that neither of us can fix, that hangs over us like a shroud. And yet, even in the fear I know that with the prayers of this community and of others of the faithful, I will keep walking this road toward Jerusalem, asking God to help both Steve and me to keep our knees from buckling, reminding us again and again how this story will ultimately end, even when we can't hear it or see it or feel it.

Remember that suffering is only part of the story, though it's mighty hard to remember that truth in the midst of the storm. Jesus tells his disciples that, yes, he will undergo great suffering, and yes, he will even be killed, executed on a cross as a criminal, but even so ... on the third day, God will raise him up.

You see, the third day will get us through the first two. After this hard conversation with Peter and the disciples, Jesus takes a few of them up a mountain to pray, and God transfigures him up there. Jesus shines like the sun, a way to remind the trembling disciples, and all of us, that the third day is coming. God had shown Jesus a vision of his coming death, but even that vision is not all darkness. As Barbara Brown Taylor says, "It leaked light." Just as Jesus leaks light as he stands on that mountain. Taylor goes on to say:

There was clearly something that lay beyond it (the vision of death), and Jesus knew his job was to walk toward it instead of running away. ("God in Pain: Teaching Sermons on Suffering," p. 58-59)

Jesus says to the disciples, "Do not be afraid." Even on the way to Jerusalem, do not be afraid. Even when the night is dark and you are stuck in a ditch, do not be afraid. Even when it looks as if there is no way out, do not be afraid.

"If anyone wants to become my follower, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." Here is where we find our life, in broken bread and a cup poured out in love for us. The transfigured Jesus of the mountain will become the disfigured Jesus of the cross, and yet the third day is coming. Weeping may linger for the night, but a shout of joy comes with the morning. Thanks be to God for the freedom we have in the one who says, "Take up your cross, and follow me." ♣

Good Bye George, continued from page 1

he promptly made an association with some figure out of history, film or television culture. I was "RoboCop." This, he painstakingly explained to me, was because the character who played RoboCop in a movie was Somebody Murphy. Hence Murphy, aka RoboCop. Charming.

Some did better than that. Frank Ostrowski, our weekly soup chef, often arrived with Lloyd Fabri. George would squint at them and point carefully from one to the other: "Frank ... Lloyd ... Wright!" Ed became "Mr. Ed the Talking Horse," which unfortunately degenerated to "Horseface," much to Ed's delight!



Murphy Davis

George loved to pull his sock hat down whenever anyone wished to take his picture!

For more than 20 years George lived around us, and from time to time he lived with us. Every month when his disability check arrived, George would call a cab, retreat to his favorite cheap hotel and hole up for about 10 days, eating pizza, smoking filtered cigarettes and watching TV. Then the money would run out and George would return to Ponce and smoke Bugler roll-ups for the rest of the month.

Over the years his body broke down, his teeth deteriorated, cataracts grew on his eyes, and his hair and beard grew until one of us got hold of him and cut it.

George sometimes would agree to come into the house to spend Christmas with us. This was always with the firm understanding that he would shower, change clothes and have a hair and beard cut before anything else.

One year I was on duty on the evening he came in, and it fell to me to cut his hair and beard. Lauren Cogswell had recently arrived in the community, so I drafted her to help. Maybe I did get a little carried away when I chose to wash his hair in the pot-washing sink (yes, I *did* sterilize it when we were done!). And yes, perhaps I got a little too much enjoyment out of using the pressure hose to get his hair clean, but boy, did it work! And he was a new man by the time Lauren and I finished his hairdo.

But after a while, George would grow restless. He needed his *own* space. He

smoked like a fiend, and he chafed at any restrictions on his smoking space. As he aged and deteriorated before our eyes, we continued to hope and pray that he would get into some sort of semi-independent housing that he could accept. We really worried that we would open the door some morning and find him dead on the doorstep.

George died in February. But there is good news. He did not die on the street. He died at home. In a bed.

Another year during the time George was with us for Christmas, a church group arrived to deliver Christmas goodies for us to give out. We had hot cider and cookies together and sang Christmas carols, and I asked George if he would sing a carol for us. He closed his eyes, and in the presence of several college professors, clergy and other highly educated Presbyterians, George sang, sweetly and with utter precision, three verses of "Adeste Fidelis" in Latin. I felt quite sure that several folks were struggling to keep their mouths from dropping open. He was full of surprises.

But lest you think that George was all sweetness and light ... he could try the patience of the best. When he accosted you in the hall and said he needed to talk to you, you knew your work was cut out for you. "Aaannhhhh," he would call in a distinct nasal voice as he pointed two fingers in your direction, "annnnh, I need to talk to you." And you *knew* you were going to be there for a while.

Or when he called out your least favorite nickname-of-his-choice for the forty-eleventh time in the same morning, well, you might grit your teeth and hiss, "Yessss, George!"

George died in February. But there is good news. He did not die on the street. He died at home. In a bed.

Some months ago our good friends at Community Friendship began to work with George to find housing. After a temporary stay in a low-rent hotel, he was moved into a lovely efficiency apartment at O'Hern House, a supportive living center on the edge of downtown. He was happy as a clam. Lauren and Doug Ramseur went over to visit him, and he came out to share Christmas dinner with us.

And so he died peacefully and "at home." For his reaching an earthly home before he went home to God, we are more than thankful. He was a unique and unforgettable gift. The stories of George will go on as long as there is life on Ponce. And our prayers are unceasing that we will turn toward offering the "right" kind of care and homes for all those who are mentally ill — and, for that matter, for all God's children, period. ♣

Murphy Davis is a Partner at the Open Door Community.

Keeping the Dream, continued from page 5

disadvantaged at home. "Here we spend 35 billion dollars a year to fight this terrible war in Vietnam," he said, "and just the other day the Congress refused to vote 44 million to get rid of rats in the slums and the ghettos of our country."

The U.S. government's acts of violence through war in the Third World were not simply accidents or aberrations from the normal activities of that government and the monopoly corporations it served. Employing a systemic social analysis of the international situation, King thought it was logical that the U.S. government was "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today." For him, the imperial war conducted by a superpower against poor nations of color mirrored the domestic capitalist war against poor white people and people of color. To fight against racial discrimination and the poverty faced by white Americans at home automatically led to a global struggle. Consequently, King preached: "I have said that the problem, the crisis we face, is international in scope. In fact, it is inseparable from an international emergency which involves the poor, the dispossessed and the exploited of the whole world."

Nonviolence was a personal and theological way of life.

Not only was the United States the greatest initiator of violence on earth, it was also one of the main, if not the main, economic investors that stole natural resources from and exploited cheap labor in the Third World. A vast unequal exchange existed between the actual value of raw materials and people of color's physical labor in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific islands, on the one hand, and the wages they received and the compensation obtained for wealth stolen from their countries on the other hand. In other words, the government and the elite monopoly capitalist corporations that support it were using the military, direct investments, and control of international financial organizations to reap billions of dollars from the cheap labor of working-class people in the Third World.

In the context of calling for a "true revolution of values," King linked the demonic nature of capitalism and its foreign investments when he stated:

"A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of [these] countries."

Indeed, in King's analysis, the countries of the Third World became underdeveloped precisely from a conscious political policy of the U.S. government, the military-industrial machine and the elite group of billionaire corporations that sucked Third World countries dry. When King surveyed the international scene, he saw a vast discrepancy between Third World poverty and the enormous wealth accumulated by Western powers. Monopoly capitalism does not stop at pushing down racial minorities and white working-class people at home; it also needs capital transfusions and consumer markets abroad.

Moreover, King understood the marriage between U.S. violence abroad and unjust economic investments when he stated: "We in the West must bear in mind that the poor countries are poor primarily because we have exploited them through political and economic colonialism. Americans in particular must help their nation repent of her modern economic imperialism." King teaches us that the conscience of an "awakened activist" cannot remain satisfied with a shortsighted focus on local problems, if only because she or

he "sees that local problems are all interconnected with world problems."

And if one bears the cross of Christ, one has to assume politically a systemic analysis of international relations, because injustice and evil at home will never cease until injustice and evil abroad cease. To limit our vision only to the rough waves of domestic race relations and poverty would be like seeing only Jesus' baptism in the calmness of the River Jordan and not comprehending the Christian mandate that we must walk also with him on the rough seas of Galilee throughout the world.

Likewise King opposed American wars abroad because he felt that he was called to be consistently nonviolent. As pastor of a local church and a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, he felt compelled not only to counsel against the use of violence in the Civil Rights Movement; he also believed that killing people at home or abroad was wrong. For him, nonviolence was not a political tactic or a lesson in a manual on civil disobedience. Nonviolence was a personal and theological way of life. That is why he wrote the following about the government and the media:

"They applauded us in the sit-in movement when we nonviolently decided to sit in at lunch counters. They applauded us on the freedom rides when we accepted blows without retaliation. They praised us in ... Birmingham and Selma, Alabama. Oh, the press was so noble in its applause and ... praise when I would say 'Be nonviolent toward Bull Connor,' 'Be nonviolent toward Jim Clark.' There is something strangely inconsistent about a nation and a press that would praise you when you say 'Be nonviolent toward Jim Clark' but will curse and damn you when you say, 'Be nonviolent toward little brown Vietnamese children!'"

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. exemplifies the tough choices for the clergy and lay leadership of the church of Jesus Christ. His profound sense of justice for the disadvantaged and those cast aside in the marketplace of life, his consistent focus on starting all of his ministry with the plight of the poor, and his sober imitation of Jesus' call to love one's enemy are all being sorely tested today. In today's society of the prosperity gospel spewing from pulpits, where too many churches spend hardly any time on poor babies after they are born and most of their preaching on "the right to life," where it is fashionable for ministers to either support or take a wait-and-see attitude toward the nation's current war over oil, King sounds like a voice crying in the wilderness. Yet if we are to take seriously the importance of racial justice (and, of course, gender justice), then, like King, we must take on race, gender, poverty and war as an integrated whole.

The key is a justice based on love. It is the underlying thread that holds together all that we do, whether it is in our families, churches, communities, nation or the world. Love is that thread. However, as we close with King's words, we see that it is a tough love. Dr. King preached the following:

"Could it be that [people] do not know that the good news was meant for all men [and women] – for Communist and capitalist, for their children and ours, for black and for white, for revolutionary and conservative? Have they forgotten that my ministry is in obedience to the one who loved his enemies so fully that he died for them? What then can I say to the 'Vietcong' or to Castro or to Mao as a faithful minister of this one? Can I threaten them with death or must I not share with them my life?"

I hope my sharing with you, in this essay, some reflections on Martin Luther King Jr. as a window into the relationships among black theology, the black church and the contemporary experience will prompt you to do some critical reflection and self-reflection on the nature of your faith. I trust that these remarks have provided some food for thought and further discussion. ✠

This concludes a two-part series.

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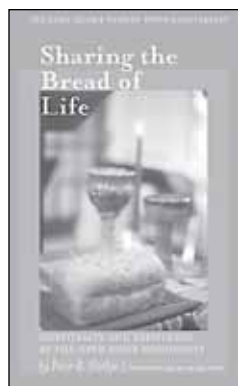
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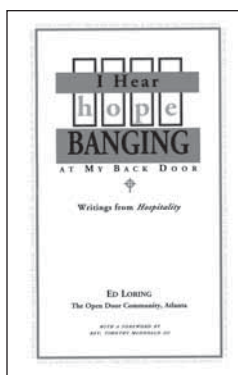
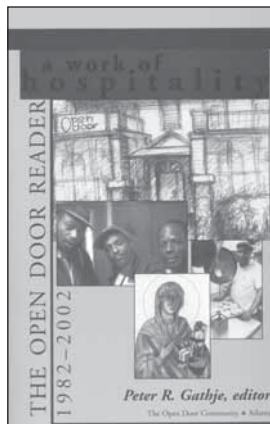
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Bring Us Back to Our Senses

The Festival of Shelters: A Celebration for Love and Justice
By Eduard N. Loring with Heather Bargeron

Preface by Dick Rustay

Reviewed by **Steven Andrews**

Editor's note: Steven Andrews is a student at Columbia Theological Seminary and a volunteer at the Open Door Community, where he helps with Monday Morning Breakfast and Friday evening house duty.

"The Festival of Shelters teaches us the truth against the lies, the hope against the despair, and the way against the wandering. Life is good and Creation is good. Let's hit the streets and have a party." So declares Eduard Loring in "The Festival of Shelters: A Celebration for Love and Justice," written by Loring and Heather Bargeron, with a preface from Dick Rustay.

The book looks at the thinking behind and practices of a modern re-creation of the ancient Jewish festival of Sukkoth, also called the Festival of Booths, which has been practiced by the Open Door Community since 1989. It develops a rationale for re-creating the festival and offers a glimpse into how it has been practiced. It does all this with the stated intention of giving modern American Christians a new holiday to add to their calendars.

In Loring's view, Christmas and Easter have been violated and domesticated by cuteness and commercialism. "Only Christianity among the world's major religions was founded by a martyr, who was a political threat to the religious elite and the builders of empire." But our current holy days and festivals fail to reflect that. Our current holy days and festivals have been hijacked by the culture around us, and so, in many ways, have we.

Though we are called to a countercultural faith that values peace over violence, sharing over keeping, and building over destroying, we drive in cars with tinted windows, live in houses with rooms we never go into, and throw away food because we just have too damn much of it. We pay taxes to an unjust government and shop in stores that don't pay a living wage. We participate in systems that crush and destroy people, and we do this because we are women and men of privilege.

Worst of all, we have come to believe that our privileges are something we've earned.

We've worked hard, right?

We made all the right choices. Right?

We are women and men of privilege, and when we commit the grievous sin of believing that our privilege is anything but a gift from God, the re-creation of Sukkoth can bring us back to our senses. When the Hebrew people were freed from slavery in Egypt, they lived in tents and depended on God for manna. They were homeless. They depended on donations. Sukkoth was created to remind the housed and fed Jewish people of their former time in the wilderness, and of their need to depend on God for all things.

And if they needed a festival like that in their time and place, we need it 10 times as much in ours. So in this book, Loring, Bargeron and Rustay call on us to leave our houses and refrigerators behind for a time, to take to the streets, to take over contested public space, and to remember what it was like to be in the wilderness.

Why? To have a festival that hasn't been hijacked. To show solidarity with the homeless men and women God called us to be near. To remember the wilderness. To declare in public space what we believe and why we believe it. To move

June 19, 1968, continued from page 4

will to put healing programs over killing programs."

The day, the march, the speeches, the songs and prayers, the poverty and suffering in Resurrection City, which looked and smelled more like Crucifixion City, was a gift beyond ordinary gifts. Something Holy happened to me. I had taken Step Two in living the death of Martin Luther King Jr.

There is a small remnant of radicals around the world who continue to live the death of Martin Luther King Jr.

Exhausted and confused, I fell sound asleep before the bus got outside the Beltway. Shortly a bolt of lightning flashed and ear-splitting thunder roared like bombs bursting in air over Vietnam or Dresden or Nagasaki or Baghdad. I jumped up yelling. People in the bus laughed. I felt foolish and alone.

From the back of the bus walked a Black man to my side. He held out two fried chicken drumsticks and said, "Here, eat this chicken. It'll hold us till we get home."

Foretaste of Eucharist. The Black Christ feeding the white graduate student while northward bound we rode the lonesome highways.

The rain fell again and again and again. On June 24, 1968, Resurrection City drowned. Many if not most had gone home by then. The second civil rights March on Washington was called a failure by the pundits and priests of the American Establishment. But was it? Seems so today. But was it?

Many years have passed. Forty in fact. There is a small remnant of radicals around the world who continue to live the death of Martin Luther King Jr. Especially his vision and teachings that moved toward a nonviolent revolution to restructure America. The seeds King planted found good soil, roots have grown, the harvest is large but the workers are few. Isn't it time to regain the momentum? Let's have a Poor People's Campaign throughout the land and build Resurrection Cities everywhere that death and oppression and poverty seek to kill and harm our neighbors, meaning the poor people. ✦

Eduard-the-Agitor Loring is a Partner at the Open Door Community.

into space where the powers have driven away the poor, and to have a celebration that reclaims that space.

What does this kind of celebration look like? Aside from the fact that it involves temporary shelters and public proclamations of faith, the authors of this book avoid specifics. This is not a how-to manual, and that is deliberate. The Open Door celebrates Sukkoth the way it does because of its time and place in Atlanta, because of the relationships developed here and because of the nature of space in our city. It will look different in other places with other contexts, and that's the way it should be.

So if you're looking for a how-to manual, don't pick up this book. If you want a general history of the modern festival, don't pick up this book. If you want anecdotes, you would be better off just visiting 910 and talking to Dick. But if you want to know the reasons why modern Christians need this festival, read this book. And if you want some motivation to get off your ass and make it happen where you are, read this book.

It's free, so you have nothing to lose. And the modern Christ movement has a lot to gain. ✦

Grace and Peaces of Mail

Hello Eduard,

I received your letter belatedly because it was routed to the wrong cell block. Also, you deserve great thanks for sending your friends that beautiful, heavy paper with pictures on it. The grizzly bear stood out, but the picture I like most is that of you, Murphy and Ed Weir. I plan to cut that picture out and put it in my photo album.

Ed, I am so, so sick and tired of the people (animals) in this prison administration. I've *never* seen any prison administrators as *low down* as these! If it's not one devilish thing they're doing, it's another. I hope they burn in hell when judgment day comes.

When I took the envelope with the watch to the mail room, I told THAT WOMAN what was in the envelope. It was my old, broken Lorus watch without a band. She weighed it at a cost of 69 cents. I put 82 cents worth of stamps on the envelope. Apparently, THAT WOMAN, or some other scumbag, opened it to check for contraband and didn't put the watch back in. To me, that is *theft!*

Soon this place is going to blow up into a riot. Ninety percent of the prisoners feel greatly abused. At most prisons, full building shakedowns are usually once a year. Each building here has had about 15 shakedowns so far this year. Continual shakedowns destroy property and dampen morale. Keep a keen ear out for the implosion in this prison.

There is something else I need to say. As is evident, I met Murphy first. I met her when she lectured in my Mercer University Social Problems class in 1988. Initially, I did not know she was married. I did know that she was a casually dressed, very intelligent, very attractive woman who touched me deeply through her lecture on the homeless. I had heard women in the Black Panther Movement talk with such fire and brimstone, but I had never heard a white woman "get down" with so much soul. Murphy's influence on me ultimately led me to connect with you. Her influence on me also led me to work on establishing the homeless shelter for the Urban League.

Upon arriving in Atlanta, I immediately called Rep. Calvin Smyre to let him know that I left Urban League with a letter of commendation. Then I called Murphy and offered her my assistance with the 910 community. Since I was slated to attend Mercer full time and work full time, Murphy unselfishly encouraged me to concentrate on my studies.

One of the essays that I give my GED students to write is "In your opinion, what are the three greatest social ills in our society today?" My selections are homelessness/poverty, diseases (AIDS etc.) and wars. I'm sure Murphy could give a good lecture in relation to that essay topic.

God is the redeemer. The powers that be can keep the 40 acres and a mule or any other type of reparation. Free me, so that I can be what God wants of me!

Tell Murphy I said thanks for sharing that joy (trip to Alaska) with all her (and your) friends. That made my day!

Shalom,

M.J.

in a Georgia prison

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for your witness to the gospel. I continue to pray for you!

Sincerely,

Jackie Griffith

Sisters of St. Joseph

Savannah, Georgia

Friends,

Your witness and work is an inspiration to all of us for justice and peace.

Mark Frey

Akron, Pennsylvania

To all the wonderful folk at 910,

I just wanted to say a big THANKS for hosting me in your community over the last three weeks. It's been a special time for me, as I've enjoyed the work, the good company and your rhythm of life. There's much I can learn from the way you live.

I don't know yet what my plans are post-New York, but it is possible I may come back down this way, because I've enjoyed it so much. I will keep in touch and let you know.

I hope [this winter] is a beautiful time. I will be thinking of you all while I freeze my Aussie butt off in the snow. I appreciate the invite to stay. It made me feel cared for and very welcome in your home, so I'm sad to leave. However, this may be the only chance I have to see real snow. Even if I hate it, I can at least know I've tried it.

Love and blessings to you all,

Bonnie Wykman

Lockridge, Australia



Bruce Bishop

By voice mail:

Phil, this is Dorothy Woods, and I was calling to tell you I'm not going on the [Hardwick Prison] trip this Saturday because my son, thank God, is going to the halfway house. Tell everybody I said thanks for everything. At the kitchen where they feed us, tell them that I'll be praying for them. May God bless you and everybody that is affiliated with the Open Door Community. God bless.

Dorothy Woods

Atlanta, Georgia

Editor's note: Dorothy Woods was a regular passenger on our monthly trip to visit her son in one of the prisons in Hardwick, south of Milledgeville.

Hello, my name is John and I am currently housed in Foothills Corrections in Morganton, North Carolina. I wanted to send a letter to say thank you for all the great articles. It is nice to know that even through all the struggles, there are still faithful people out there. I get a lot of joy out of reading *Hospitality* every month.

I wanted to comment on the racism that is still degrading today's society. I am a white man who acknowledges the different treatment of black men as opposed to white in the prison system. I have seen firsthand the persecution of black inmates. It is far easier for me, as a white man, to get something done in here than it is for someone of color.

I have been persecuted myself in here because I am a member of the Rastafarian movement. I move in the name of Christ, but I am called certain things for being in a movement that uplifts black culture. But Jesus told us to love our neighbor no matter the race. I strive for peace and one love between all people of this world. No matter what, you are my brother or sister in Christ.

I just wanted to share an opinion, because you always have articles on how racism is such a big issue. I thank you for all your insight.

Sincerely,

Johnathan Hall

Morganton, North Carolina

Pastor Loring,

How are you these days? I called my sister the other day and she said she and Mother got in touch with you about an attorney.

[I liked] your article "What Ever Happened to John the Baptist?" (January 2008 *Hospitality*).

I was reading in another published article that indeed Herod the Great's birthday is remembered each year at Santa Claus Time. Surprised me to read that information. Also, I read that Jesus Christ's birthday was actually during the first or second week of September! Were they on the right track with this information also? Well, even though I am ignorant of many issues in the Bible, I continue to press on.

Herod killed the children because of fear. Is that why our society is killing black youth, because it is afraid? Why the children? Why the black youth of America?

Your point is well taken not only about the Palestinian children, but future generations are being destroyed because of fear right here at home, today!

I really appreciate your statement "We, who seek mercy and joy in the hard sayings and harsh stories of the Scriptures, have been given one of the most important gifts of mature discipleship and abundant life: a way to read the Bible. That is, a way to think, and see, and hear according to the word by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit." I like the way you phrased that.

Phil Berrigan has some John the Baptist in his soul.

I noticed some of the incidents — who John was, what John did — and made a list:

1. Jesus said that John was as good as you get from one born by woman.
2. JB was a mama's boy.
3. JB's clothes and diet were an embarrassment.
4. JB looked a lot like Mike Vosburg-Casey.
5. JB was loud.
6. JB was blunt, not afraid.
7. JB was celibate.
8. JB unmasked the terrible link between political and ecclesiastical power.
9. JB was a wild man.
10. JB was an undomesticated, unruly, stormy image of God.
11. JB built his movement on the Radical Remnant and recruiting new disciples.
12. JB preached preparation, resistance to the religious elite and Roman domination, and readiness: "Change your way of living, for the Kingdom of God is at hand."
13. JB taught and modeled radical and resistant deeds on the way.

These things that JB did and stood for and even put forth stand as examples that few if any revolutionaries can model. What JB said to the crowds took enormous courage. I thank you for the history lesson, the creative associations of John B to present-day revolutionaries and those of the past.

Also, will you take the DNA sample and send it to one of the companies that were listed to find out which area of Africa you come from?

A.P.

Wheeler State Prison

Alamo, Georgia

The Open Door Community,

I read every issue of your newspaper and admire your work so much. My church and I do what we can here to work for justice.

With kindest regards,

Rev. Barbara Paulson

Huntington, Massachusetts

Open Door Community Ministries

Breakfast & Sorting Room: Monday and Tuesday, 7 – 8 a.m.

Women's Showers & Sorting Room: Wednesday, 8 a.m.

Soup Kitchen: Wednesday, 10:45 a.m. – 12 noon.

Harriet Tubman Medical and Foot Care Clinic:

Wednesday, 7 - 9 p.m.

Men's Showers & Bag Lunch: Thursday, 8 – 11:30 a.m.

Use of Phone: Monday and Tuesday, 6:45 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.

Wednesday and Thursday, 9 a.m. – 12 noon.

Retreats: Four times each year for our household, volunteers and supporters.

Prison Ministry: Monthly trip to prisons in Hardwick, Georgia, in partnership with First Presbyterian Church of Milledgeville; monthly Jackson (Death Row) Trip; pastoral visits in various jails and prisons.

We are open...

Sunday: We invite you to worship with us at 5 p.m., and join us following worship for a delicious supper.

We are open from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. for donations.

Monday through Thursday: We answer telephones from 9 a.m. until 12 noon and from 2 until 6 p.m. We gratefully accept donations from 9 until 11 a.m. and 2 until 8:30 p.m.

Friday and Saturday: We are closed. We are not able to offer hospitality or accept donations on these days.

Our Hospitality Ministries also include visitation and letter writing to prisoners in Georgia, anti-death penalty advocacy, advocacy for the homeless, daily worship and weekly Eucharist.

Join Us for Worship!

We gather for worship and Eucharist at 5 p.m. each Sunday, followed by supper together.

If you are considering bringing a group please contact us at 770.246.7628.

Please visit www.opendoorcommunity.org or call us for the most up-to-date worship schedule.

May 4	Worship at 910 Eucharist service and Music with Eilise Witt, Joyce Brookshire and Friends
May 11	Worship at 910 Day of Pentecost Murphy Davis preaching
May 18	Worship at 910 Nelia Kimbrough preaching
May 25	Worship at 910 Edward Loring preaching
June 1	No Worship at 910 Retreat at Dayspring Farm
June 8	Worship at 910 Eucharist Service
June 15	Worship at 910 Eucharist Service
June 22	Worship at 910 Eucharist Service
June 29	Worship at 910 Eucharist Service



Clarification Meetings at the Open Door

We meet for clarification on selected Tuesday evenings from 7:30 - 9 p.m.

Plan to join us for discussion and reflection!



Daniel Nichols

For the latest information and scheduled topics, please call 404.874.9652 or visit

www.opendoorcommunity.org.

Medicine Needs List

Harriet Tubman Medical Clinic

ibuprofen
lubriderm lotion
cough drops
non-drowsy allergy tablets
cough medicine (alcohol free)

Foot Care Clinic

epsom salt
anti-bacterial soap
shoe inserts
corn removal pads
exfoliation cream (e.g., apricot scrub)
pumice stones
foot spa
cuticle clippers
latex gloves
nail files (large)
toenail clippers (large)
medicated foot powder
antifungal cream (Tolfanate)

We are also looking for volunteers to help staff our Foot Care Clinic on Wednesday evenings from 6:45 - 9 p.m.!

Needs of the Community



**we need sandwiches
meat & cheese on
whole wheat**

Living Needs

- jeans
- men's work shirts
- men's belts (34" & up)
- men's underwear
- socks
- reading glasses
- walking shoes (especially 9 1/2 and up)
- T-shirts (L, XL, XXL, XXXL)
- baseball caps
- MARTA cards
- postage stamps
- trash bags (30 gallon, .85 mil)

Personal Needs

- shampoo (full size)
- shampoo (travel size)
- lotion (travel size)
- toothpaste (travel size)
- combs & picks
- hair brushes
- lip balm
- soap
- multi-vitamins
- disposable razors
- deodorant
- vaseline
- shower powder
- Q-tips

Food Needs

- turkeys
- hams
- sandwiches
meat & cheese
on whole wheat
bread
- quick grits

Special Needs

- backpacks
- single bed
mattresses
- blankets

From 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, our attention is focused on serving the soup kitchen and household lunch. As much as we appreciate your coming, this is a difficult time for us to receive donations. When you can come before 11 a.m. or after 2 p.m., it would be helpful. THANK YOU!